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THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TEACHER OF SPANISH

A number of causes are working directly and indirectly in producing the unprecedented demand for Spanish in the schools and colleges throughout the country. Among these causes may be mentioned: the propaganda of the American Association for International Conciliation (with its splendid Pan-American Division); the All-Americas Association (with its important Trade Journal); the Pan-American Union (whose great value our public is only beginning to appreciate); the recent Mexican affair (with its A. B. C. arbitration and its subsequent Commission); the discussion in public of the various shipping bills (which are aimed primarily at Pan-American trade); the new venture of the National City Bank of New York (which in the past three years has already established nine branches, to say nothing of sub-branches, in Latin-American countries, and which is annually preparing a goodly group of promising young collegians for work in that field); the visit of a delegation of university men to the principal countries of South America in 1914 under the auspices of the aforesaid American Association for International Conciliation (which delegates have since been lecturing all over the country on Latin-American relations or writing books and articles on related subjects); the presence at Washington during the holidays of 1915-16 of the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress; the presence in this country of many representative Latin-Americans during the whole period of the San Francisco Exposition (many of whom remained among us during the year 1916); the further fact that many of these same delegates made long tours individually for lecture purposes throughout the central and southern states; and as a result of our own recent entry into the war, the intensified interest in the spiritual and political ideals of the twenty other sovereign states in the western hemisphere, in eighteen of which Spanish is the official language.

Our people are gradually coming to realize that President Butler of Columbia University was right when he said recently

that in view of our international duties and privileges every American citizen ought to learn Spanish as his second language. If the present writer should make this statement in his own name he would instantly be accused of presenting a *pro domo* argument; but that charge cannot be laid at the door of Dr. Butler, who as president of a great university is not supposed to have any linguistic prejudice and who by reason of his training in the older linguistic school (Latin, Greek, French and German) would, if he had any prejudice at all, lean rather toward some language other than Spanish. As a matter of fact, in admitting that President Butler is right in the aforesaid statement, the present writer is contradicting some things that he himself has printed on former occasions, but this is not the time for him to enter upon either a justification or an explanation of his change of opinion.

It is to be hoped that young America, in turning to the study of Spanish, will not limit her interests to the merely commercial aspect of our international relations. The Hispanic American likes to be treated as a man, not merely as a business man. He likes to be understood morally, intellectually, socially, as well as commercially, and he likes to have people know that he has antecedents and forebears, and is not like Topsy who "never did have no father and mother but jus' grew." In other words, he likes to have others acquainted with the history of his own country, with its literature, art, institutions, and general culture, and with that of the mother-land; Spain or Portugal as the case may be.

But this increasing opportunity for informing our compatriots concerning the language, literature, life and ideals of our southern neighbors and of their ancestors brings with it enormous responsibilities.

In the first place we must be on our guard against losing judgment under the stress of this new demand for the language of our predilection. We ought never to descend to the position of mere propagandists and act as though we considered our own language specialty to be the only subject that should occupy the student's attention. A concrete example will show best what I mean. During the registration period at this University, one of the advisers, a member of the department to which I belong, was being consulted by a student who wished to take the language

in our department without continuing German of which she had had only three semesters. The adviser in question declined to approve such a program. He informed the student that he would approve of her taking up the study of the Romance language in question provided she continue her German for a fourth semester, or that he would approve her taking that fourth semester of German at once and postponing the beginning of the study of the Romance language in question until a later semester. The adviser was careful to explain to the student that the reason for insisting upon a fourth semester of German was the belief of the faculty that less than two years of a given language is not sufficient to give the student a permanent hold on that language and that to permit her to stop her German at that point would be tantamount to throwing away the three semesters of work already done. I thoroughly approve of the attitude of the aforesaid adviser and commend the practice to all language teachers whenever similar problems arise. It is particularly desirable that our Hispanists shall not lose their sense of perspective by reason of the present enthusiasm for Spanish, since we are all of us, I take it, teachers of students rather than teachers of subjects.

Another responsibility that lies heavy upon us is that of finding adequately prepared teachers in sufficient numbers. Despite the increased use to which we are putting one or another form of the direct method we must not allow ourselves to fall into the practice of using a native teacher whose only qualification is the fact that he was born in a Spanish-speaking country. We do not think of putting native born Americans in charge of our English classes unless they have been especially trained in the teaching of English. The leading masters of the direct method, Dr. Walter of Frankfurt, and Dr. Rouse of Cambridge, are themselves masters not only of the language which they teach but of the language of their pupils and are able instantly to give in the vernacular the exact equivalent of the unintelligible foreign word that may have just been used in the lesson.

An explanation of the thing I have in mind will be found in a discussion that I had two years ago with a distinguished South American university professor of English, who speaks English admirably. I asked him point blank what kind of teachers he wished to have in his English department. His reply, briefly

summarized, was as follows: "For all courses of regular instruction I insist on having natives of our own country who have not only been well trained in the best courses we give in English, but who have studied for a considerable period either in England or the United States, and who have thus become thoroughly conversant with English and American history, culture and literature, as well as with the idiomatic practices of the English and the Americans. My reason for this is twofold: first, psychological; our compatriot knows all the difficulties that his pupils must meet, because he has had to meet them himself (this reason of course deals with the very fundamentals of pedagogy); and second, patriotic: I do not approve of having regular instruction in the hands of foreigners who seldom are able to acquire the point of view of their pupils, and who, even in the rare cases that do acquire such a point of view, have had to go through a long period of residence during which they did not have this point of view. All this of course does not mean that I do not wish to have any English or Americans in my department. Quite the contrary. For practice courses, both elementary and advanced, I welcome both English and Americans who shall have made the teaching of English their specialty, and who shall have attained some fluency in the speaking of Spanish, so that when the student wishes to ask how in English certain ideas are expressed and himself expresses those ideas in some Spanish idiom, the English or American teacher shall know exactly the import of the phrase that the Chilean pupil is trying to transfer into English. For this latter work I naturally do not want the mere hack who happens to have a glib smattering of the language of his prospective pupils coupled with a slovenly use of his native tongue. I insist upon having brainy young English or American collegians, who, for the sake of the traveling experience, are willing to spend two or three years in a foreign country, and in a university atmosphere, while they are earning their way in a dignified, although temporary, position. In other words then, my regular permanent positions are for my compatriots trained as aforesaid, and my temporary practice positions are for the type of English or American that I have indicated."

This should be very largely, *mutatis mutandis*, the ideal that we should hold up before our American teachers who wish to

devote themselves to Spanish. But lest I be accused of opposing the employment of any foreigners in teaching positions in the United States, let me give a bit of personal history. In the course of my student career in this country it was my privilege (and I consider it one of the blessings of my life) to come under the instruction of three distinguished foreigners, whom I love and admire: a German, a Frenchman and an Italian, and I trust that I may be pardoned for mentioning them specifically. In high-school days I fell into the hands of Charles F. Kayser, now head of the department of German in Hunter College, New York, who taught me German and Latin. In college and university days I had Professor Adolphe Cohn, Emeritus Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures in Columbia University, who taught me French; and Carlo Leonardo Speranza, late Professor of the Italian Language and Literature in Columbia University, who taught me Italian and Spanish. In all three of these cases the gentlemen mentioned were masters not only of the languages which they taught me but also of English, which they spoke with an elegance that is lacking in the style of many of our professors of American birth and breeding. Furthermore, in addition to this unusual mastery of spoken and written English, they were possessed of a keen insight into the ideals and psychology of their pupils, as I could demonstrate extensively if space permitted. Such men should always be welcome in the educational system of our American democracy.

Young men from Spain and Spanish America who have received special training as teachers of Spanish and who have a good knowledge of English, therefore, should always be welcomed as teachers of Spanish in our schools and colleges; and especially those recommended by the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios, Madrid, of which Menéndez Pidal is director.

There is another phase of this difficulty of finding adequately prepared teachers. I mean the danger of allowing the public to think that we are deliberately accepting teachers not well prepared, and the danger of criticizing unjustly teachers upon whom may have been laid a burden of responsibility for which they were confessedly not prepared, although they are doing their best to acquire the necessary preparation as soon as possible. Again I can best explain what I have in mind by a concrete example that

came under my own observation and which to my certain knowledge can be duplicated in many places. A teacher in a high school at X was informed one spring that she would have to teach an elementary Spanish class the following year. (The circumstances which brought about this state of affairs do not concern us here but I may add that I know they were imperative.) The teacher in question was a graduate of one of our leading universities and had specialized in English, French and Latin, and was teaching English. She took a double summer session course in Spanish at another of our leading Universities, spending eight hours a day in a Spanish atmosphere. On that preparation, plus what she could get in private lessons during the succeeding academic year, she was obliged to carry an elementary course in her high school. Knowing her own deficiencies she took a summer session course at a University near her home, for obvious financial reasons. By the beginning of the third summer she had recouped her finances and spent the summer at the summer session at Madrid. The fourth summer her finances forced her again to study at a nearby University. (The nearby University in both these cases possesses a strong Spanish department.) A fifth summer was spent at a distant University with a strong Spanish department and the sixth summer again found her at the nearby University, where a visiting professor was so impressed with her ability and attainments that he offered her a teaching fellowship for the succeeding year if she could obtain leave of absence for that purpose from her school. The authorities in that school had vision broad enough to be willing to permit such leave of absence and the lady spent the year in residence at the aforesaid University, from which she obtained the degree of Master of Arts. She is today considered, by college authorities whose opinion counts, the best teacher of Spanish in the high schools of her State. The statement could hardly have been made concerning her first year's teaching of Spanish, and no one knew it better than she. It would have been obviously unfair for her superior officers or the general public to criticize her at that time for not having attained the level of excellence to which she has since risen. She would, however, have been just as obviously open to legitimate criticism if she had lost courage and given up in her striving for better preparation.

Although in the aforesaid case the teacher acquired the necessary preparation by dint of long work and great personal sacrifice, our public and our school boards should be brought to see the desirability of attaining such ends more speedily. At this very moment there is before the National Education Association a proposal that some means be found by which the school boards and the public may aid financially in the acquisition of this very expensive and yet absolutely necessary equipment.

In all the foregoing I would not for a moment be understood as holding a brief for poor teaching or inadequate equipment, but I do feel that, as a matter of plain justice, our judgment of teachers and their performance in this transition period should be tempered with reason; and that at the same time the teachers who are obliged to assume this new work should feel also under obligation to deserve this tempered judgment by putting forth their utmost efforts, both intellectual and financial, to acquire as speedily as possible the equipment that will place them beyond the need of such tempered judgment.

To this same end I would recommend that both school board and university offer scholarships to teachers who are suddenly brought face to face with the necessity of becoming masters of subjects other than the one for which they had originally prepared.

By a ruling of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, all high-school teachers in Illinois, and all other teachers in the State who are qualified to matriculate in the University as regular students, are entitled to Summer Session scholarships, exempting them from payment of the tuition fee. To matriculate regularly in the University, one must satisfy in full the entrance requirements for some one of the colleges. By a more recent resolution of the Board of Trustees, the scholarship privilege is extended to graduates of the Illinois State normal schools, class of 1916, and to persons (otherwise qualified) who have not been teachers the past year, but who are under contract to teach in the state during the coming year.

Probably other states have similar arrangements through the State University; but this does not go quite far enough since, in the proper preparation for a teacher of Spanish, there must be a period of somewhat lengthy residence in a Spanish-speaking country and naturally the preference would in most cases be for

Spain, because she is the mother of them all, and because of the splendid summer course and the three trimestrial courses organized by the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios in the University of Madrid. This residence abroad could be most easily and effectively financed by some such arrangement as the afore-said scholarships, which could be surrounded by conditions that would amply protect the interests of the school boards or of the university which granted them.

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FIRST ANNUAL MEETING
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF TEACHERS OF SPANISH
DECEMBER 29, 1917
IN NEW YORK CITY

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